

EDITORIAL

U.S. sends strong message

For all their bravado and breast-beating about sovereignty, Quebecers would do well to heed the warning signs of what would be an economic disaster for the province if it severs ties from Canada.

Those warnings, which started out subtly, have now become quite unequivocal.

The latest indication of what might happen to Quebec came a couple of weeks ago from no less a source than the President of the United States. In Ottawa, ostensibly to sign an acid rain pact with Canada, George Bush made it clear how he'd like to see Canada evolve.

"We're very, very, happy with one unified Canada which has been friendly, been allies — staunch allies — and when you have the unknown, you've got to ask yourself questions," Bush said.

Taken in a national context, the comments could be construed as calling for the government to deal with the Quebec question and get the province back inside.

In a more parochial view, the statement seems to put Quebec on notice that if it proceeds with a sovereignist agenda, the resulting political and geographical entity will not find favor with the U.S.

The irony in this comment is that Quebec has tied itself to the U.S. more than any other province. The vast majority of its dealings are with the south and it depends on U.S. cash that comes from energy sales to boost its economy.

To take any kind of action to disturb the States, it can be argued, would hurt Quebec far more dramatically than the rest of the country.

Canada has seen the kind of economic barriers that can be quickly erected by the U.S. to protect its businesses. It would only take several quick actions to cut Quebec off at the knees if the province were to pursue interests not approved by our southern neighbor.

The timing of the statement could not have been better for Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, nor worse for Quebec Premier Robert Bourassa.

The PM benefitted because it shows where the U.S. interests are. As for Bourassa, it should end any kind of separatist leanings his Liberal Party has been flirting with.

And as if the Bush statement wasn't enough to shake the faith of would-be Quebec sovereignists or separatists, running parallel to Bush's statement came word that Quebec has been placed on credit alert by the Montreal-based Canadian Bond Rating Service.

The credit watch is a means of warning bond investors from around the world that something significant is going on in Quebec and it would be wise to think carefully before investing in the province.

Although the bond market did not react to the announcement, it clearly shows Quebec that any dramatic political and economic change in its status could cripple the provincial economy.

To further muddy the political and economic waters in Quebec, word came last week that Kodac Canada Inc. deleted a section dealing with Quebec, from a report concerning the ability of Canada to compete globally if the political composition of the country changes.

With massive trading blocs forming to deal with a highly-charged world revolving around trade, Quebec would become a bit-player and both it and Canada would suffer.

As a neighbour of the U.S., Canada could muster on, but for little Quebec, it would be nothing short of a disaster.

As it is now, Quebec has a voice in Ottawa to represent it on the international stage. Without that link, Ottawa's presence would decline as Canada became more closely tethered to the Washington sphere of influence.

If Bourassa and other Quebecers don't like what's been happening, it's nothing compared to the reality a new arrangement with Canada will have in a North American and global context.



LETTERS

Excalibur welcomes letters to the editor on all topics. We will publish, space permitting, letters up to 500 words in length. They must be typed, double spaced, and accompanied by the writer's name, signature and telephone number. The opinions expressed belong to the writers and do not necessarily reflect those of Excalibur staff or directors. However, we will refuse letters that are racist, sexist, libellous or those which attempt to incite hatred toward an individual or an identifiable group. All material is subject to editing. All submissions must be addressed to the Editor-in-Chief, Room 111, Central Square.

Clarifying Lex fight for "editorial autonomy"

To the editor,

As a staff-member of *The Lexicon*, I would like to clarify a few things concerning our battle for editorial autonomy.

Firstly, it was never a question of college content versus freedom of the press. *The Lexicon* has never stated that there should not be specific Bethune College content in the paper. Nor was our demand for editorial autonomy ever presented as a question of choosing between the two. They are *not* mutually exclusive.

Editorial autonomy does not mean that we want a York wide student levy, and it does not mean that we are no longer responsible to Bethune students.

Along with autonomy we also demanded the creation of a new, autonomous Board of Publications with representatives from *The Lexicon*, Council and the student body — commuter students as well as those from residence.

As it stands now, the Board is made up of three people, all of whom are appointed by Council. Non-resident students are not represented at all.

A distinction must be made between Bethune students and the Bethune community — one does not necessarily imply the other.

There are many students who are affiliated with the college who are not part of the Bethune community and whose affiliation means little, if nothing to them. This is why we feel the accusation that we do not serve Bethune students is false. Issues such as tuition hikes, underfunding, racism, sexism, homophobia and student activism do affect Bethune students.

The problem lies with Bethune community — specific content. But that is not what we were yelling about last Monday. What we were protesting was the way Bethune college council chose to deal with that problem.

The Lexicon is a democratically run paper and has been practicing relative autonomy in recent years, electing our editor and making decisions internally.

In a council meeting which reviewed the college constitution, we proposed amendments that would bring it up to date with these practises.

Bethune college council not only voted against these amendments but they decided to begin "enforcing" this ten year old, archaic constitution. This meant that *The Lexicon* was refused editorial autonomy and it is no longer a democratically run paper. (Yes, Sarah Payne, when the staff of a paper cannot chose their own editor, it means that the paper does *not* have editorial autonomy.)

In short, council chose to deal with the problem by taking control of the paper and dictating to the staff.

Since our resources are so limited and the paper is staffed by volun-

teers, our stance has been that the best way to ensure Bethune community reportage is to encourage students in the community to get involved in the paper and help us cover the issues — that is what working at a volunteer-based paper is all about. This request is most often met by resentment on the part of council and many students in the community.

Finally, despite Sarah Payne and Ian Knight's trite claim that "student activism is alive and healthy in Bethune College, the *only* thing the Bethune community mobilized against all year is a free press. To follow it up, they have shut down the only paper on campus that is dedicated to student activism. A commendable record.

Perhaps it would be more accurate to say "reactivism" is alive and healthy in Bethune.

Pat Micelli
Production Manager, *The Lexicon*

Harassment in public sector

An Open Letter to David Peterson.

I was pleased to learn that you are lecturing at York University. I see this as an opportunity for you to focus on some important issues that the public is not aware of such as failures in the justice system.

The particular issue I refer to is *Victimization and Scapegoating in the Public-Sector Work Environment*. Unfortunately, victimization and emotional harassment is alive and flourishing in Canada. Public sector employees have been plagued for years by abusive and incompetent authority figures/superiors, and the numbers are growing.

It has been described to be as dangerous and as destructive as sexual harassment, and at times worse. Demotions, layoffs and terminations are only one small part. It's the *not so visible* tactics of emotional abuse (mind games designed to

break the spirit) that demand attention.

In my research, two common themes became glaringly evident. First, victims were all employed in the public sector, and second, the tactics of abuse and harassment were all the same.

Victimization doesn't just happen. It can strike without warning and without reason or just cause. Officials from all levels of government have been aware of this kind of abuse for years, yet continue to ignore it. The public doesn't hear about it, because it's all shoved under the carpet, and nicely covered up. On the inside, cowardice and self-protection reign supreme.

Our justice system needs upgrading. Our system does not recognize the wide range of damage caused by emotional abuse. Canadian justice

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The distinct opinions and articles appearing in Excalibur belong first and foremost to the individual writers and are not necessarily shared by any other Excalibur staff or board member.

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